

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A combination of a metallic beverage can end closure and a drinking straw, comprising:

a circular end wall adapted for interconnection to a neck of a container;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said end wall;

5 a substantially non-detachable pull tab hingedly interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel;

a rupturable score line positioned on said central panel and defining a substantially circular opening having a diameter operably sized for receiving said drinking straw, said drinking straw having an outer diameter substantially no greater than said substantially circular opening to create frictional engagement therebetween; [[and]]

10 a vent opening positioned adjacent said substantially circular opening and substantially within the same horizontal plane to provide venting in said small opening beverage can end closure during use of said straw, wherein when said drinking straw is positioned in said small opening beverage can end closure said engagement substantially prevents the inadvertent removal of the drinking straw within said substantially circular opening[[.]]; and

15 a reinforcing bead positioned proximate to a hinge line interconnecting said tab to said upper surface of said central panel to further inhibit detachment of said tab from said central panel.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1; wherein said vent opening provides at least about 0.0004 inches of venting area when said substantially circular opening is occupied by the straw.

5. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1; further comprising at least one embossing bead positioned proximate to a termination point of said score line to further inhibit detachment of said tab from said upper surface of said central panel.

6. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1; wherein said tab is further interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel within said rupturable score line with a rivet.

7. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1; wherein said substantially circular opening is created in said central panel by pulling said pull ring in one direction only.

8. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1; wherein the beverage can end is substantially spill-proof when said straw is positioned within said substantially circular opening.

9. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1; wherein said central panel is oriented at a substantially right angle to a vertical orientation of a beverage can body.

10. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein at least a portion of said pull ring is elevated above said upper surface of said central panel to facilitate grasping.

11. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said pull tab comprises a pull ring on one end and a nose on an opposite end, said nose hingedly interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel.

12. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, wherein said rupturable score line is positioned proximate to a central region of said central panel.

13. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 1, The small opening beverage can end closure of Claim 1, further comprising a raised reinforcing bead which substantially encircles said small opening to shroud a leading edge of said substantially circular opening.

14. (Currently Amended) A combination of a metallic beverage can end closure with a small opening adapted for receiving and retaining a drinking straw, comprising:

a circular end wall adapted for interconnection to a neck of a container body;

5 a countersink interconnected to a lower portion of said circular end wall and extending downwardly therefrom;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said countersink;

a score line positioned on said central panel which defines said small opening;

10 a substantially non-detachable tab having a pull ring on one end and a nose on an opposite end, said nose hingedly interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel, wherein when a force is applied to said pull ring said small opening is created in said central panel;

a rivet further interconnecting said nose to said upper surface of said central panel within said score line; [[and]]

15 a vent opening further defined by said score line which is positioned adjacent said small opening and substantially within the same plane to provide adequate ventilation in said can end when said small opening is occupied by said drinking straw, wherein the drinking straw has an exterior diameter sized to frictionally engage diameter of said small opening upon insertion of the straw to substantially prevent inadvertent removal of the drinking straw after insertion in the small opening, wherein said combination of said metallic end closure and said drinking straw provides a substantially spill proof beverage container[.]; and

20 a reinforcing bead positioned adjacent at least a portion of said score line.

15. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 14, The beverage can end closure of Claim 14; wherein said vent opening has a minimal cross-sectional area of at least about 0.0004 inches .

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 14, The beverage can end closure of Claim 14; wherein said score line extends beyond a hinge line of said nose and said upper surface of said central panel to further inhibit said tab from becoming inadvertently detached from said central panel.

18. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 14, The beverage can end closure of Claim 14; wherein said tab pull ring has a smooth upper surface and a smooth lower surface which are substantially void of sharp edges.

19. (Currently Amended) The combination of Claim 14, The beverage can end closure of Claim 14; further comprising a raised reinforcing bead which substantially shrouds said centrally disposed small opening.

20. (Currently Amended) The combination of a metallic beverage can end closure with a small opening and a drinking straw adapted for insertion and retention therein, the combination comprising:

a circular end wall adapted for interconnection to a beverage can body;

5 a countersink interconnected to a lower end of said circular end wall;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said countersink;

a substantially centrally disposed circular opening defined by a score line and positioned within said central panel and having a first diameter no greater than about an external diameter of said drinking straw;

10 a tab having a pull ring on a first end and a nose on a second end, said nose pivotally interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel at a first location and non-detachably interconnected to said upper surface of central panel with a rivet; and

15 said drinking straw having an external diameter with at least a portion which is substantially equivalent to said first diameter of said substantially centrally disposed circular opening, wherein when said drinking straw is inserted into said substantially centrally disposed circular opening said

drinking straw is substantially restricted from travel within said substantially centrally disposed circular opening as a result of frictional engagement with an edge of said substantially centrally disposed circular opening;

20 a vent opening positioned proximate to said small opening and substantially within a same plane to allow ventilation while a beverage is being extracted through said drinking straw[.]; and

a reinforcing bead positioned proximate to a termination point of said score line to further inhibit detachment of said tab.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously presented) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, further comprising extending a score termination point beyond a hinge line where said nose is pivotally interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel to inhibit detachment of said tab.

23. (Previously presented) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, wherein said vent opening has a cross-sectional area of at least about 0.0004 square inches.

24. (Previously presented) The metallic beverage can end closure and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, wherein said drinking straw has a corrugated mid-section which facilitates bending.